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No More Battleships Needed.

From the speech of Hon. S. A. Witherspoon, of Mississippi, in the House of Representatives, Saturday, February 22, 1913.

My opposition to this bill, Mr. Chairman, is based upon the fact that the bill, in my judgment, ignores and sacrifices the efficiency of the American Navy and proposes to squander millions of dollars upon ships that we do not need. The bill seeks to appropriate \$146,818,364.53. This sum is \$23,666,825.78 more than the last appropriation and \$9,763,165.48 more than the Republicans in the days of their wildest extravagance ever appropriated in one bill. Of this vast amount \$105,587,948.53 is proposed to be appropriated to the maintenance of the Navy and \$22,284,091 to the cost of completing the construction of naval vessels heretofore authorized and \$46,418,925 for the building of new vessels, on account of which the bill seeks to appropriate \$18,946,325 for the first year's work of construction, leaving \$27,472,600 of that sum which will necessarily be included in the appropriation bill of the next fiscal year, if we pass this program.

In regard to the first item of \$105,587,948.53, it is nearly \$3,000,000 more than the amount appropriated for the maintenance of the Navy in the last appropriation bill, and this large increase in the appropriations for the maintenance of the Navy is brought about notwithstanding the fact that the Secretary of the Navy and every bureau in the Navy Department has exercised the greatest economy.

It is shown to us that at present we lack 3,000 officers of having a sufficient number to man and operate the vessels that we now have. It is shown that if we did not build another ship it would take the Naval Academy 20 years at the present rate of graduation to supply the Navy as it exists today with a sufficient number of officers. That is the fact before the committee. But I undertake to say that the Committee on Naval Affairs did not give two and one-half minutes' attention to that fact, because we were driving toward the \$45,000,000. We did not have time to consider a question that affects the very vitals of the Navy. A battleship is utterly useless without men to operate it. Enlisted men have to be trained, and it takes time to train them. Officers have to be educated, and there is no other way that you can get officers who are competent to take charge of ships of war except to train them at the Naval Academy. And yet no provision is made for the increase of our officers to supply the vessels we now have, and not only is no provision made, but there has never been in the committee any discussion of that subject or any consideration of it, because we did not have time to do it.

As long as we continue to add new vessels to our Navy the item for its maintenance is going to continue to increase by leaps and bounds, and it will be only a few years until this Committee on Naval Affairs will surpass the Committee on Pensions in the amount of money to be expended for the maintenance of the Navy unless you stop building these new vessels.

Whenever you add one more battleship to the Navy that necessitates more men. It necessitates more coal; it necessitates more powder; it necessitates more pistols; it necessitates more clothing and more food. The fact is, it increases every expense in the department.

The cost of a battleship is not the \$16,000,000 we have to pay to construct it; but no man knows what it does cost, because it increases the expense in every bureau and department of the Navy. A battleship causes all the expenses of the Navy to rise, just as the revolutions of the moon cause the tides to rise, but, unlike the moon, it never causes them to ebb. [Applause.]

And so I leave this, with the thought that you must either make up your mind that you are going to let this naval appropriation run up rapidly until it gets so big that the American people will turn us all out of office, or you have got to stop the increase in the number of vessels. That is the conception that the minority have of this bill.

I admit that our Navy is inadequate for a great many purposes. It is inadequate for the purpose of conquest. If we were to undertake to conquer England, Germany, France, and Japan, we would find that we have an insufficient fleet for such purpose, and I hope that our Navy will always be inadequate for any such purpose. It is also inadequate to gratify the greed and avarice of those who annually make millions of dollars out of the construction, repairs, coal, powder, armor, and armament necessary to maintain and increase our Navy, and for such purpose the Navy would be inadequate if we had a thousand battleships. It is also inadequate to gratify the wild-eyed extravagance of those who measure all political wisdom by the magnitude of the fund to be squandered. It is also inadequate to defend our country from invasion in case all the great countries of Europe should unite in a war against us, and I am not in favor of building any Navy adequate for defense in such case, both because I believe we will never be confronted with any such misfortune, and also because in such case I believe the wisest course would be to permit them to land their armies on our shores and depend upon such armies as we could raise to determine again the oft-decided question whether America can be conquered. But for the purpose of defending our country against attack from any nation on earth I confidently believe that our Navy is amply sufficient and fully adequate, and for any other purpose we need no Navy at all.

The question is whether the efficiency and adequacy of the American Navy and the public defense require the addition of all these vessels to our Navy. No man can intelligently determine that question unless he gets into his mind what the Navy is at present, and I want to call your attention to the meaning of the words "American Navy" and what those words signify.

For the legitimate and reasonable purpose of the public defense we have a Navy whose officers and enlisted men number 65,614 and whose vessels, of all kinds, number 277. Among this large number of vessels there are included 38 battleships, of which 33 are ready for service and 5 are in process of construction; 11 armored cruisers; 63 submarines, of which 47 are complete and 16 in process of construction; 28 torpedo boats, 54 destroyers, and other auxiliary vessels. The 38 battleships are equipped with one hundred and forty-eight 12-inch guns, thirty-two 13-inch guns, and fifty-two 14-inch guns. The one hundred and forty-eight 12-inch guns can shoot a steel shell weighing 870 pounds 12 miles, the thirty-two 13-inch guns can shoot a steel shell weighing 1,100 pounds 13 miles, and the forty

14-inch guns can shoot a steel shell weighing 1,400 pounds 14 miles, nearly twice as far as the human eye can see a battleship on the ocean. Each of these huge guns can shoot three of these immense shells every minute, or, altogether, they can shoot 696 of these terrible missiles of destruction every minute, and in five minutes they can shoot 3,480 steel shells weighing in the aggregate 223,240 pounds. In the discharge of each gun there is between 300 and 400 pounds of powder. In addition to this we have guns of smaller caliber which no man can number.

If that many shells a minute, if that many shells in every five minutes—shells weighing 223,000 pounds of steel—if that is not enough to make the Navy adequate, I would like to know how many it would take. [Applause.]

But if it be true that if we have not enough ships, if it be true that these 232 guns on our battleships are insufficient to defend us in an attack, then I submit to this House that no increase in the number would help the matter. If we were engaged in war with some other country and our guns were to shoot 696 of these immense shells at them every minute, 3,480 of them, weighing 23,000 pounds, every five minutes, if that did not destroy them, then no amount of shells could destroy them.

It is just as, if you had 232 men around the Washington Monument well supplied with baseballs, and they were throwing those balls at the monument and it did not fall, would you say that the trouble was that they did not have baseballs enough to knock it down? Would not you know that the reason it did not do it was because the balls did not have the destructive force necessary to destroy it? [Laughter and applause.]

It is the same way if you had 38 American battleships shooting at a fleet of the enemy, and with all these 696 shells flying every minute it did not destroy them, it would demonstrate to any sensible man that these shells would not do it for the lack of sufficient destructive force, and to multiply them would not help the matter at all. [Applause.] The truth of the matter is it is almost inconceivable how you could use any more battleships than we have. It is impossible to conceive, and your committee has had before it no testimony to show how more than 38 battleships could be used to advantage in a naval battle. When these battleships are taken out on the ocean to search for an enemy they go in line. I was present last year on these ships for four days when they were engaged in target practice. The admirals explained to me that the manipulation of the ships in target practice was made such as to be as near as possible to what it would be in an actual engagement. If our fleet were sent out on the ocean to search for an enemy and destroy it, the front ship would be $9\frac{1}{2}$ miles ahead of the rear ship, and if it should meet the enemy the front ships would destroy one another before the hindmost ones would get close enough to begin to engage in the battle, and if the enemy had twice as many ships as we had, in such a case as that their line would be 19 miles long, and the battle would be over, so far as all those in front were concerned, hours before the last ship in the enemy's line would get in sight. But suppose that our Navy should start out to hunt the enemy and the ships should travel abreast, there has to be a certain distance between

the ships. If it should meet an enemy that had twice as many ships as we had, its line would be twice as long as ours, and consequently the ships in our line would engage in battle with those in the enemy's line opposite to ours. The ships of the enemy in that part of their line not opposite to ours would be too far off to take part in the engagement at all. Of course, if these naval battles were going to last for hours and days like a battle on land, it would be different, but with these immense, destructive shells, a naval battle can last but a few minutes. If the guns can strike the enemy's ships and they have the destructive force to destroy them, the battle would be over in a very few minutes, and consequently those ships in the line of the enemy double as long as ours, which were not opposite to ours, would not be able to take part in the engagement until it was over.

It is just for this reason that you can use only a certain number of battleships in a battle. One of the admirals of the Navy told me that 16 was the number. The impossibility of using 38 battleships in an engagement is the very reason we have divided our Navy into two fleets. One is called the active fleet and the other is called the reserve fleet. The fact is that we have so many battleships that we take half of them and tie them up and call them the reserve fleet, to be used in case the active fleet is defeated.

The gentleman from Ohio [Mr. Bathrick], who is always of a somewhat inquisitive turn of mind and anxious to discover the truth, is the only member of this committee who ever propounded a single question to find out whether it is necessary to have more battleships, and he propounded it to the Secretary of the Navy in these words:

MR. BATHRICK: You have stated that it was necessary to build battleships. What are your reasons; why do you believe it necessary?

SECRETARY MEYER: I believe it to be necessary in order to have a fleet that will meet the possible requirements of emergencies that might arise. Otherwise, if you are not going to have a fleet that will meet emergencies that may arise, a fleet made up of vessels of a character which other navies which may come in contact with us are building, it would be better to have no Navy and no fleet; better than to have a lot of vessels which would be crushed like a lot of pasteboard boxes.

Look at that answer. He was asked to give the reasons why it was necessary to build more battleships. The question meant, why is it that 38 battleships are not enough; it meant why 232 big guns are not enough; it wanted to know what good it would do to have a greater number. That is the meaning of the question, and the Secretary's answer is, to provide for emergencies that may arise in the future. Well, is that any answer to say that we want to provide for emergencies that may arise, or does it explain why 38 battleships would not provide for the emergencies that might arise; is that any answer why 41 would provide for them and 38 would not? Mr. Bathrick was not to be put down by any such answer as that, and so he said this:

MR. BATHRICK: I rather expected to get some reason other than "may" or "might." I thought, perhaps, that you might have some specific special reason.

SECRETARY MEYER: I do not want to for this reason: The other day I talked rather freely about the Caribbean Sea and the Pacific, and it was all in the papers the next day. You have asked a question which it is perfectly proper to

ask, and I will sit down and discuss it with you some time, but I do not want to embarrass foreign relations by making statements which might be misunderstood and create offense where none is meant to be given.

Then you are confronted with this situation: When the Secretary of the Navy is asked to tell us whether we should build more battleships, why he believes it is necessary, he declines to give any reason on the ground that it might get into the newspapers.

Mr. Chairman, the Secretary of the Navy has not only declined to give any reason to the committee and the committee has not only no reason to give to this House which it got from the experts, or in the evidence before us, but the Secretary of the Navy has plainly told us that we did have about as many battleships as we need. He was asked this question:

Mr. GREGG: Twenty-one in the first line.

Secretary MEYER: The ideal number which the Navy Department hopes to work up to is a fleet of 41 battleships, with necessary auxiliaries, 21 in the active fleet and 20 in the reserve fleet.

According to that statement of Secretary Meyer, the ideal number of battleships is 41, and we already have 38.

Again, on page 21 of his annual report, the Secretary uses this language:

A total of 41 battleships, with a proportional number of other fighting and auxiliary vessels is, in the opinion of the Secretary, the least that will place this country on a safe basis in its relations with other world powers. This number should be reached as soon as practicable, and then the fleet should be kept up to its standard strength by replacing obsolete vessels with new ones by a uniform yearly replacement program.

In other words, Mr. Chairman, the Secretary of the Navy himself refutes the idea that we must have a yearly program and continue to build battleships every year. He clearly tells us there is a limit to the number of battleships beyond which it is useless to go. He fixes this limit at 41, and declares that is the ideal number, but he declines to give us any reason at all why 38 is not just as ideal as 41, and I think it would be an impossibility for any human being to sit down and figure out and prove how 41 battleships with 30 more guns on them would do any more good than 38 with 232. The truth is that we have long since passed the ideal number of battleships that could be effectively used in a battle, and the building of more is a useless waste of the people's money.

Now, I want to call the attention of the House to the fact that in 1905, at the time the Secretary of the Navy advised Congress that our fleet was then sufficient to provide for all contingencies within the range of probability and at the same time when the President of the United States in his message informed Congress that the units of the Navy should not be increased, our Navy consisted of 24 battleships, 12 completed and 12 under the process of construction. Since that time we have constructed 1 more battleship and 13 *dreadnoughts*, which have more guns and more powerful guns, and which more than double the capacity of the Navy. If a Republican President and a Republican Secretary of the Navy believed, as they said they believed in 1905, that our Navy was sufficient to provide for everything

within the range of possibilities, and that the units should not be increased, and if since then we have more than doubled our Navy, then I ask Democrats if they think we ought to add still more to it? [Applause.]

(Concluded next month.)

Book Notices.

THE PEACE MOVEMENT OF AMERICA. By Julius Moritzen. New York: G. P. Putnam's Sons. 419 pages, octavo. With 64 illustrations.

This book is unique among peace works. It is written from the point of view of the journalist. It treats the subject as news. It presents in a picturesque way some recent incidents in the movement in this country—the signing of the arbitration treaties with Great Britain and France; the great services of President Taft to the cause of arbitration; the visits to this country of Count Apponyi, Baron d'Estournelles de Constant, and the Baroness von Suttner; the creation of new peace societies and the federation of the peace organizations of the country in the American Peace Society; the beginnings of peace propaganda in the South; the work of the Pan-American Union, etc. Mr. Moritzen deals in a fresh, live way with nearly all the current American questions which bear upon the problem of international harmony—the neutralization of the Panama Canal; the problems of the Rio Grande border; the "Yellow Peril" myth, etc. In the treatment of these various subjects he uses copious extracts from the speeches made and the newspaper opinions published in connection with them. "No Creed in Brotherhood" and "The Farmer as a Peace Ally" are fine chapters, in which the organization of peace work in Utah, Nebraska, and South Dakota is set forth. Chapters are devoted to the work and recent reorganization of the American Peace Society, to the World Peace Foundation, the American School Peace League, the Mohonk Arbitration Conference, and the United States Group of the Interparliamentary Union. But it would be impossible merely to mention all the valuable things in the book without quoting nearly the whole of it. Mr. Moritzen has collected with much labor and care and the fullest sympathy with the cause, the important facts connected with the peace movement in this country in recent years, and almost without exception his statements are accurate and reliable. His "Peace Movement of America" ought to find its place on the peace shelves of all libraries which pretend to give information and guidance on this great and rapidly growing cause.

THE BALKAN WAR. Adventures of War with Cross and Crescent. By Philip Gibbs and Bernard Grant. Boston: Small, Maynard and Company. 241 pages. Price, postpaid, \$1.35.

This book makes no pretense of being written from the standpoint of the pacifists. But the reading of it will make any man of clear intelligence and moral sensitiveness realize more deeply perhaps than ever before the utterly barbarous character and moral as well as physical loathsomeness of war. The two correspondents, one representing the London *Graphic* and the other the *Daily Mirror*, succeeded, in spite of the severe